



Applying to medicine in 2027: what actually decides your application

A free guide from Step2Med. Dates checked against UCAS and the UCAT Consortium on 10 September 2026.

Most of the advice online describes a process that has already changed

The medicine application has been rebuilt twice in three years. The BMAT is gone. Abstract Reasoning has been dropped from the UCAT. Scores are no longer out of 3600, and the free-text personal statement has been replaced. Plenty of the advice still circulating describes a process nobody sits any more.

This guide tells you what the process is now, what actually decides the outcome, and what to do about it.

You sit the UCAT before you choose where to apply. What you do with that score decides more than anything you write.

Almost every medical school filters on the UCAT before anyone reads a word you have written. So you pick your four schools already holding the number they will judge you on. Very few applicants make any real use of that.

Most spend September on the personal statement and choose their four schools in an afternoon. It wants to be the other way round.

The order the cycle actually runs in

1. **Sit the UCAT** — July to September 2026. You get your cognitive score the same day; your Situational Judgement band follows a few weeks later.
2. **Choose your four medical schools** — against your actual score and each school's published policy on how it uses the UCAT.
3. **Write the three personal statement questions.**
4. **Submit by 15 October 2026, 18:00 UK time.**
5. **Interview** — December 2026 to February 2027 at most schools.
6. **Offers**, then results day in August 2027.

The UCAT as it is now

- Four subtests: **Verbal Reasoning, Decision Making, Quantitative Reasoning and Situational Judgement**. Abstract Reasoning was removed in 2025 and no longer exists.
- The three cognitive subtests are each scored **300 to 900**, giving a total out of **2700**. Any "good score" figure you read that is out of 3600 belongs to the old five-subtest test and does not convert.
- **Situational Judgement is reported separately as Bands 1 to 4**, not as a number. Several medical schools reject Band 4 outright, however strong the cognitive score. Check each one. This catches more people out than anything else in the process.
- You can sit the UCAT **once per cycle**. Sitting it twice is treated as misconduct.
- Schools are still recalibrating after the scale changed, so cut-offs published for 2025 entry and earlier will not tell you much about where you stand now.

The dates that actually bind

- **Booking closes 16 September 2026 at 15:00 UK time.** The UCAT Consortium makes no exceptions and there is no appeal.
- **The last test day is 24 September 2026.**

If you have not booked by 16 September you cannot sit the UCAT this cycle, and you cannot apply to medicine for 2027 entry.

People assume they have until the 24th, because that is when testing stops. Booking closes first.

Choosing your four

- You get **five UCAS choices**, but a **maximum of four** can be in medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine/science. The fifth must be a different subject,

or left unused.

- You can apply to **Oxford or Cambridge, not both**, in the same cycle. The only exception is a narrow one for graduate medicine.
- Schools use the UCAT in three broad ways, and the gap between them is wide. Some set a **hard cut-off** and reject everyone below it. Some **rank** applicants and interview from the top down, so the working threshold shifts every year. Some fold it into a **combined score with your academics**. A score that misses a cut-off at one school can sit well inside the interview band at another.
- Take the fifth choice seriously. If all four medicine choices sit above your score, that one non-medicine option is everything you have until Extra opens in February.

If you are an international applicant

Non-UK places are capped at roughly 7.5% of each school's intake, which comes to somewhere around 500 nationally. Most schools run international applicants as a separate pool, and the threshold in that pool is considerably higher. Some of the newer medical schools take home students only, so check eligibility on the university's own admissions page before you spend a choice on it.

The personal statement is now three questions

Since 2026 entry, and unchanged for 2027, the single free-text statement has been replaced by three fixed questions.

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
 2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
 3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?
- **4,000 characters in total**, including spaces, shared across all three answers. The question text itself does not count.
 - **Minimum 350 characters per answer**. There is no maximum on any individual answer, so the split is yours to decide.
 - Admissions staff read the three answers as one statement. Repeating the same example across two questions costs you characters and gains you nothing.

Keep it in proportion. Many medical schools say openly that they do not score the personal statement; it gets read around the interview rather than used to shortlist. It still has to be good, because an interviewer may well quote it back at you. But it should not eat the September you need for choosing your four schools.

What has gone

If your notes, or the advice you have been given, mention any of these, they are out of date.

GONE	WHAT REPLACED IT
The BMAT	Nothing — the last sitting was October 2023, and every former BMAT school now uses the UCAT
Abstract Reasoning	Three cognitive subtests only
A UCAT score out of 3600	A total out of 2700
One free-text personal statement	Three fixed questions sharing one 4,000-character budget
A cheaper single-choice UCAS fee	A flat fee of £34.50 for the 2027 cycle, whether you use one choice or five. Waivers are available if you have received UK free school meals, and from this cycle for care leavers too

One further change worth knowing. The Medical Training (Prioritisation) Act 2026 became law in March 2026 and gives UK and Republic of Ireland medical graduates priority for Foundation Programme places, with the same principle running through specialty training. Selection for medical school is unaffected. What changes is what the degree leads to at the end of it, which matters most if you are an international applicant hoping to stay and work in the NHS. One detail catches people out. The priority group is defined by where you trained, not by your citizenship or by whose name is on the degree, so a UK medical school's overseas campus, or a course where most of the training happened abroad, does not count.

Key dates for 2027 entry

WHEN	WHAT
16 September 2026, 15:00 BST	UCAT booking closes. No exceptions, no appeals
24 September 2026	Last UCAT test day
15 October 2026, 18:00 BST	UCAS deadline for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine/science, and all Oxford and Cambridge courses
December 2026 – February 2027	Interview season at most medical schools
13 January 2027, 18:00	Deadline for most other courses — when a later-added fifth choice would need to be in
23 September 2027, 18:00	Final date for any 2027 entry application

Your school or college will have its own internal deadline, usually several weeks before 15 October.

They need time to check it over and attach your reference, so that earlier date is the one you are actually working to.

What to do this week

1. If you have not booked your UCAT, book it today

Everything else here is advice you can weigh up. This one is a wall. Miss 16 September and there is no route into medicine for 2027 entry.

2. If you already have your score, use it before you choose anything

Sit down with your score and each school's published admissions policy. Most of them set out exactly how the UCAT is used, whether that is a cut-off, a ranking or a combined score, alongside their GCSE and A-level requirements and where they stand on SJT bands. An hour on this beats a week of redrafting.

3. Then be honest with yourself about the fit

If your score sits well below the threshold at all four schools you like the look of, applying anyway costs you a year. Moving one or two choices towards schools that weight academics more heavily, or that rank rather than cut off, is often what separates four rejections from an interview. A lot of people who get in have done exactly this.

4. Then write

The three questions reward specifics and punish generalities. A placement, a care home shift, a book that changed how you think: the credit is in what you took from it, not in having done it.

About Step2Med

We have supported medical and dental school applicants since 2019, taught by NHS doctors who came through the process themselves.

We are building a school-by-school breakdown of how each UK medical school uses the UCAT. If you would like it when it is ready — along with the timeline for your stage and our free guidance — sign up at tinyurl.com/step2med

For details of our UCAT and personal statement courses, email hello@step2med.co.uk

Always check the current guidance on ucat.ac.uk, ucas.com and each medical school's own admissions pages. Thresholds and policies change, sometimes at short notice.

Sources: UCAS (ucas.com) dates and deadlines, application fee and personal statement guidance; the UCAT Consortium (ucat.ac.uk) registration, booking and test format guidance; NHS England and BMA guidance on the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Act 2026.

Step2Med is not affiliated with or endorsed by UCAS, the UCAT Consortium, or any UK medical school.

© 2026 Step2Med • hello@step2med.co.uk • tinyurl.com/step2med